

MAYOR'S COMMITTEE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES MINUTES

September 13, 2010 City Hall, Rm 209, 7:30 p.m.
1000 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton, Massachusetts 02459

Members Present:

Jane Brown
Jini Fairley
Rob Caruso, Co-Chair
Lucie Chansky
Rosemary Larking
Barbara Lischinsky
Girard Plante, Co-Chair

Staff Present:

Kathleen Cahill, Community Development Senior Planner
Lowell Haynes, Community Development Planner

Public Present:

Michael Lepie
Sandra Lingley
Michelle Hayes
Cindy Kane
Josephine McNeill
Ruth Smith

1. Discussion: Citizens for Affordable Housing in Newton Development Organization, Inc. (CAN-DO)

- **Barriers to achieving accessibility in the development of small affordable housing projects**
- **Accessible units at CAN-DO's Webster St development**
- **CAN-DO's current criteria for site selection**
- **CAN-DO's approach to incorporating accessibility going forward**

R. Caruso, Co-chair, called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Josephine McNeil provided some background on Citizen for Affordable Housing in Newton Development Organization Inc. (CAN-DO). The Organization was incorporated in 1994 and begun development in 1996. CAN-DO was started with HOME funds as the City's only Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO). A total of 36 units of housing have been developed by CAN-DO. Thus far, requirements for accessibility have not been triggered because CAN-DO has only developed smaller properties that do not trigger accessibility. A fully accessible wing was added to CAN-DO's Webster Street development, which is a group home. This development includes three bedrooms and one bathroom.

The Veteran House experience has taught CAN-DO to incorporate accessibility into the organization's site selection process along with proximity to transit, services, and other necessities.

One member of the Board asked CAN-DO if they have sought funding for accessible housing at the state level. Ms. McNeil indicated that CAN-DO has been unsuccessful in receiving state funds for non-specialized housing.

CAN-DO hopes to find a two-family that can be converted to accessible units. The Mayor's Committee and CAN-DO agreed that going forward they will work together to increase accessible, affordable housing.

2. Action Item: Consideration of the approval of the July 12, 2010 and August 6, 2010 minutes

The July 12, 2010 minutes and August 6, 2010 minutes will be amended to include Barbara Lischinsky as one of the attendees. R. Larking moved that the minutes be approved as amended. J. Brown seconded the motion and the Committee voted 7-0-0 to approve the minutes, as amended.

3. Discussion: Re-docketing request for two handicap parking spaces on Walnut Street

The Committee discussed the Alderman Linsky's request to the Traffic Council to re-evaluate a potential modification to the handicapped space on Madison Avenue created by HP2-09 on December 17, 2009. The consensus among the Mayor's Committee was that members were in favor of the re-evaluation.

4. Report: Report on projects funded with CDBG access funds

K. Cahill provided a report on the ongoing access projects funded with CDBG money. These projects include: Accessible Pedestrian Signals, Charlesbank Playground, Curb Cuts, Retrofitting Curb Cuts, Nahanton Accessible Pathway and Handicap Parking Space, Newton Centre Accessible Pathway and Handicap Parking Spaces, Newton Community Service Center – Auditorium Ramp, Historic Newton/The Jackson Homestead – Archives Preservation and Access, and Projects to be Determined.

The Committee spent some time discussing the intersection of Washington and Commonwealth Avenue. A total of \$65,000 in mitigation funds were allocated to the intersection, all of which was expended on improvements to traffic signals. The Committee feels strongly that City funds should be used to pay for the accessible improvements at the intersection instead of CDBG Accessible Pedestrian Signal

funds. The Committee requested that staff communicate this to the Mayor, in addition to establishing a policy about mitigation funds and accessibility going forward.

5. Report: Report on Transportation Forum and Fair Housing Committee Meeting (Girard Plante)

G. Plante provided a report on the recent Fair Housing Committee meeting. The Committee has been focusing on affordable, accessible housing. Barbara Chandler, the City's accessibility consultant met with the Committee about accessibility needs related to the City's compliance with accessibility regulations.

6. Other Business: Reminder about website development work

K. Cahill reminded the Committee about their project to review websites of Disability Commissions in Massachusetts in order to improve the Mayor's Committee's own webpage.

K. Cahill mentioned that she had received a complaint concerning the automatic door opener at Shing Yee, a restaurant in West Newton. She plans to file a complaint on behalf of the Mayor's Committee if the Committee is supportive. There have been several complaints concerning the non-working status of the door opener over the past couple years. The Committee is supportive of staff filing a complaint on behalf of the Mayor's Committee.

One member of the Committee mentioned that the paving work being done at Newtonville and Harvard Street has presented a dangerous situation for pedestrians, particularly those with visual impairments. Leftover pipes and stones are being stored on the sidewalks with no blockades alerting people with visual impairments of the danger. K. Cahill will speak to DPW about this situation.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.